9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

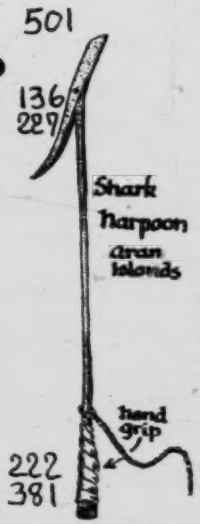

Fig. 100.
Total length 50"

Fig. 101.

as of other branches of the sciences of humanity that we know more of the ways of remote peoples of the world that we do of our own folk (Figs. 97 and 98, and Plate VI).

Before leaving the sea and coming back to shore, brief reference must be made to some other sea-creatures which have contributed to the economy of the coasts. There is the basking shark of the Aran Islands pursued in curraghs and captured with a harpoon of the type shown in Figure 100. Seals, despite the many superstitions attaching to them, have been hunted for their skins; according to an old account the skins were made into covers for the oval curraghs of the Rosses in Donegal. It is recorded that seal-catchers in Co. Cork wore on their arms "bags quilted with charcoal." The seals when they bite are said to let go the hold when they hear the crunch of the charcoal.

Shore-collecting plays a varied if nowadays greatly reduced part in the life of coastal communities. The great days of kelp-burning, when the strong dense smoke drifted far inland, are no more, but this once flourishing industry has left its traces in half-ruined kelp-kilns (Fig. 101) and in various rusting hooks and drags (102, 103) which betray the keen rivalry shown in gathering the crop. The best weeds (tangle or "fyams," that is, *Laminaria*) were cut in deep water and their value was enhanced if they were free of sand. The men would sometimes have their knives and sickles fitted with handles as much as twenty feet long: women and children with back creels, assisted by donkeys or ponies with side-creels, did the carrying. In Aran the creel women protect their backs from the damp seaweed by wearing a goatskin.

Carting or "drawing" the wrack for manuring the fields is still an active industry in spring on most Irish shores. The wrack is often carried some miles inland, and there are many stories of the contraband goods once smuggled from the coast under cover of loads of piled wrack. In Carlingford Lough, where the tides run high, wide stretches of foreshore are "planted" with rows of boulders in orderly fields called "plans." The bladderwrack which grows on the stones is

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

132 washed up on them; at least four of these are now in Inishbofin, and large quantities of drift of various kinds are thrown up on the shores from time to time.

137 The botany and zoology of the islands is outside of the scope of the present Paper, but a few words of general description may help to make the picture of the place more complete.

Here, as elsewhere, on our western coast, there is a tradition that the islands were at one time well wooded; and this is corroborated by the occasional discovery of tree-trunks in the bogs. At the present day, though under the influence of the warm, moist climate, other vegetation flourishes, trees of any sort cannot be got to grow, and all attempts to rear them have hitherto been failures, as the strong winds quickly destroyed them. Even in the most sheltered spots bushes will hardly grow, and there are not a dozen of five feet in height to be found in the islands.

136 Large numbers of sea-birds nest on the rocky islets round the coasts; pigeons in large numbers inhabit the caves of Inishshark, and, until within a few years ago, eagles used regularly to nest on a high pinnacle of rock, known as the Boughal, in the channel between the islands. Rabbits and rats are both very plentiful; but hares, bats, weasels, and frogs are not found on either island.

[821] Around the coast, porpoises, sea-otters, and seals (which latter are looked upon as forerunners of stormy weather when they appear) are often seen, and the "sun-fish" (*Selache maxima*, the great basking shark) appears usually about the end of March; it leaves nearly always before the end of June, and was until a few years ago regularly fished for.

III.—Anthropography.

125 1. *Methods.*—These do not require any very extended notice, being practically the same as those employed last year, and described in the report on the Aran investigation. A few changes were made, consisting mainly in the substitution of measurements and instruments shown by experience to be needed, for some which had proved unnecessary, and the use of the new observation form provisionally adopted by the Irish Sub-Committee for the Ethnographic Survey of the British Association. This form, though not perfect, proved to be of much value for field work as, owing to its arrangement, observations can be made with much greater rapidity than is possible by the old system; and the chance of omitting any important point is almost entirely avoided. The economy of time alone is a point of much im-

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

A Folklore Survey of County Clare (*continued*).

IX. *Supernatural Animals.*

776 There is a rich fauna of supernatural animals in the county, even snakes being represented in it. There can be little doubt that the highly imaginative early Irish personified the more terrifying powers of nature, such as the sea, the storm, and the thunder. The roaring, writhing waves in a sea creek or river swirl may have suggested some great creature, (too great to be natural), wallowing under the waters, and so given rise to the endless *péist* names and legends, in which a distinction is never drawn between the spectral and the natural.

[136] *Péists.*—Ireland, although free from serpents at all times known to science, was yet much dominated by them mentally. Probably no lake of any importance in Clare was untenanted by a serpent, a wonderful animal, or a city. A *péist* could, however, be chained or slain by a hero or saint, and the majority of the *péists* were believed to have been eliminated by such warriors in the same way as the bear and, later, the wolf were cleared away by ordinary mortals. *Péist* only meant beast, and seems to mean no more in many place-names not belonging to lakes or river pools. Cappanapeasta near Inchicronan need not imply a monster, but Poulnapeasta we may always venture to translate as "water dragon's lair." There are many examples in tradition of the "dweller in the waters," "the serpent-god of this hallowed stream." In the *Hunting of Sliabh Truim* we find a *péist* with "ears as large as the gate of a Cathair" (stone fort) and "tusks as big as a tree."[1] The saga of *Da Derga's Hostel* brings into one the Norse, Irish, and Hebrew beliefs of the *péist*, Midgard Snake, and Leviathan by its tale of the "Leuidan, that surrounds the globe and strikes with its tail to overturn the world."[2] The *Feis tighe chonain* and *Hunting of Sliabh Truim* are full of allusions, and contain a dialogue with a Grecian *péist*, and tell how Finn slew spectres, arrachs, and aimids (women bugbears), and "banished from the raths (earth forts) each *péist*." Even in a nearly contemporary history of a hero of the time of Canute, a

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 115. [2] *Revue Celtique*, vol. xxi., p. 54.

[P. 212]

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

Celts. But local legend, historical evidence, and genealogical data collected by my wife and me indicate that the present population is descended from immigrants who came to the island from many parts of Ireland following the Cromwellian incursion of the seventeenth century. The islanders still express bitterness over conditions of poverty and servitude experienced by their ancestors during the 300 years that they lived under absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. All of the excesses of foreign domination suffered by mainland peasants were suffered by the inhabitants of Inis Beag, but were aggravated by the ordinary hardships of island living. Little was known about events in Inis Beag during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the island was visited by archeologists and publicized in their scientific writings. The surrounding area of the mainland was very much isolated and seldom visited at that time, although trading between Inis Beag and nearby communities was carried on, and passing ships sometimes called at the island.

Agricultural pursuits have always dominated the subsistence economy of Inis Beag. Most householders own land on which they grow potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes rye and sally rods and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, asses, and horses. The back of the island, behind the communities, is divided into four strips, and each landowner possesses numerous plots located along the "quarter" on which his village fronts. The average combined holding is sixteen acres, and almost 50 percent of the land is composed of arable indigenous and manufactured soils. Potatoes are the staple crop, and they are supplemented by various other vegetables, milk from cattle and goats, meat from island sheep, fish, eggs, and other foods, many of which are imported and sold in the shops. Rye is grown for thatching, and sally rods are used to weave several types of containers. Other subsistence activities (which also provide income for some folk) are knitting, weaving, crocheting, tailoring, and sandal making.

A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and sheep fattened on the island and of surplus potatoes and fish, the collection of seaweed for extraction of iodine at a mainland factory, the keeping of tourists in private homes, and the manufacturing of craft objects for sale to visitors and for export. At the turn of the century, fishing from canoes—with nets and lines often many miles out in the ocean—was an important subsistence and income activity. A few islanders who owned little or no land lived primarily by fishing and kelp-making. But over the past few decades, fish have become less plentiful and the weather more inclement, especially during winter